

Media Release

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Wheatbelt deaths can be reduced with low cost solutions

An independent assessment of three Wheatbelt roads with high crash rates has found installing low-cost road safety measures could reduce crashes and potentially save lives.

RAC General Manager Corporate Affairs, Will Golsby, said the Wheatbelt region was overrepresented in the State's fatalities, and something urgently needed to be done to address the problem.

"This audit identified a number of problems with the Pinjarra-Williams Road, Toodyay-Goomalling Road and Brookton Highway, including a lack of sealed shoulders and overtaking opportunities and inconsistent road signage," Mr Golsby said.

"Last year, one person died on WA roads nearly every two days, and nowhere was this fatality rate worse than the Wheatbelt, which was more than four times the State rate.

"Single-vehicle runs offs are the dominant type of crash in regional WA. More than half of all fatal crashes between 2007 and 2012 were regional drivers running off the road and didn't involve a second car."

The audit, which was commissioned by RAC and carried out by OPUS International Consulting, also showed low-cost solutions were an effective way to lower the risk to regional motorists.

Some of the recommendations included widening the road shoulders, improving the road condition and adding in shoulder rumble strips.

Wide and sealed shoulders are important for many reasons. They allow vehicles to pull off the road safely in emergency situations and also help to minimise the potential for conflict with oncoming traffic as there is more clearance.

"The audit showed both Brookton Highway and the Toodyay-Goomalling Road are narrower than Main Roads WA's recommended minimum 3.5 metre width, and neither has sealed shoulders.

"Safer roads are a key part of reducing WA's road toll and are a cornerstone of the State's Road Safety Strategy, Towards Zero. As a State, we need to ensure we do everything we can to help bring down Western Australia's road fatality rate."

In 2009, the Western Australian Auditor General identified the State was facing an \$800 million dollar maintenance backlog. This situation has worsened with the State Government recently announcing a 15% per year cut in road maintenance expenditure for the next three years.

"This year's fatality count is already 22 deaths more than the same time last year. Clearly now is not the time to step away from taking action to address safety on our roads..

"With more than \$80 million dollars sitting unspent in the Road Trauma Trust Account, RAC is calling on the State Government to draw on this money to repair some of regional WA's most dangerous roads."

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